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Add Pinochet to the CIA bashers

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In his first on-the-record interview since the pope's visit to Chile in early April, President Augusto Pinochet expressed deep distrust of the United States as the world's democratic leader, and said he thought the CIA might have been involved in a recent attempt to assassinate him. Gen. Pinochet said he would not speed up his planned transition to democracy in Chile.

Gen. Pinochet's remarks were made during a wide-ranging, hour-long session on April 28 with a fact-finding delegation from Prodemca, an American organization dedicated to the promotion of democracy in Central and South America.

The session underscored the reasons for the rising tensions in Chile as the society is opening up — too slowly for opposition leaders and just about on schedule for Gen. Pinochet's military junta.

Gen. Pinochet, while declaring himself a democrat, revealed a deep fear that modern democracies tend to deteriorate over time as special interests come to dominate a nation's affairs. That, he said, is what happened in Chile, beginning as early as the 1890s and culminating in the election of Marxist Salvador Allende in 1970. That election, says Gen. Pinochet, brought Chile to the brink of both an economic collapse and a civil war which the communists were prepared to fight and win. (Mr. Allende won the 1970 election with 36 percent of the vote and formed a coalition government with the Communists, the Radical Party and a splinter group of the Christian Democratic Party.)

Chile, said Gen. Pinochet, is under

permanent pressure from communists backed by the Soviet Union, and the United States is not acting wisely as the world's anti-communist leader. "You have never won a war," he said to the Prodemca delegation. "In World War II you waited for the Russians (to take over Eastern Europe). You saved Germany, France and Belgium but there are communists active there now."

Americans, Mr. Pinochet said, did not win in Cuba, Korea, Vietnam, Iran, El Salvador or Nicaragua. One reason for this, as in Vietnam, was that America pushed her allies to move toward democracy too quickly during times of turbulence and threat. He did not intend to be hurried in Chile. He said that "as a military man" he could see

that the United States was acting too slowly in Nicaragua. When asked what the United States could do to help Chile toward democracy, he said, "Leave us alone."

Gen. Pinochet did not directly accuse the CIA of playing a role in the assassination attempt of Sept. 7, 1986, but he said that intelligence sources, including someone "who had once worked for the CIA," warned him of possible CIA threats starting in 1973, and that more insistent warnings came before the actual attempt. Gen. Pinochet said that Vernon Walters, now U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, had told him his fears were unfounded. Gen. Pinochet says he is getting unspecified assassination warnings again now.

When asked if it weren't more likely that the Soviet KGB was be-

hind the assassination attempt, Gen. Pinochet said, "Sometimes the two powers act together." Most observers in Chile believe the attack on Gen. Pinochet was made by a Chilean communist terror organization, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, which has claimed public credit for it.

Gen. Pinochet talked about his long, private conversations with the pope. He said he liked him a great deal, in part because he is "as anti-communist as I am."

Alternately jovial, stern and dynamic, Gen. Pinochet dismissed the Chilean opposition's call for a prompt general election. A timetable for democracy in Chile exists, including a controversial plebiscite in 1988, Gen. Pinochet said, and that timetable was being followed. In re-

cent months there has been some modest liberalization of press controls, of police detention procedures and of political party activity.

Some opposition forces maintain that the recent reforms are only cosmetic, but others — and diplomatic sources here — claim they are real, although leaving much room for improvement.

The main issue raised by the resurgent political activists here concerns the 1988 plebiscite that, under current law, would only give voters a "yes" or "no" choice on a candidate nominated by the military.

Only if the "no" forces won, would there be a general election for president, although a congress would be elected in any event in 1990.

Opposition forces want a general election without a plebiscite, claiming that the 1980 constitution calling for the plebiscite was enacted as a result of a fraudulent vote.

The Prodemca delegation, of which this writer is a member, expects to issue a statement today when their mission is completed.